

Fritz Metzger

Swiss architect
(1898-1973)

He is considered one of the most important representatives of Swiss Catholic church architecture between 1928 and 1968.

Metzger studied at the ETH Zurich under Karl Moser, whose St. Antonius Church in Basel set standards for modern Swiss church architecture. In 1932, following a national architectural competition, Fritz Metzger was commissioned to build St. Karl's Church in Lucerne. He constructed this church in the New Building style, which, like Expressionist painting, was denounced at the time as degenerate and Bolshevik. The construction of this church is considered the first truly modern church building in Switzerland and a key work of New Building, as the church used concrete consistently and subordinated to the new aesthetic. Furthermore, this church was the first in Switzerland to incorporate the Liturgical Movement's demands for active participation of the faithful in worship into its spatial concept. The St. Theresia Church in Zurich-Friesenberg is considered another exemplary example of New Building. The floor plan of this church, with only one side aisle, is asymmetrical, and the small windows, positioned high on the side walls of the church, prevent the view outside. Thus, the church structure focuses the view of the worshiper on the liturgical events.

During the Second World War, Fritz Metzger abandoned the concept of the longitudinal church. The two churches of St. Felix and Regula in Zurich-Hard and St. Francis in Riehen, built simultaneously in 1949–1950, provided impetus throughout Europe for the debate on the question of liturgically appropriate construction. Influenced by the German church architect and theorist Rudolf Schwarz, Fritz Metzger attempted to give greater expression to the active participation of the faithful in the liturgical process through new floor plans (the Church of St. Francis in Riehen is built in the shape of a trapezoid, the Church of St. Felix and Regula in the shape of a transverse oval). In this way, Fritz Metzger implemented a central demand of the Liturgical Movement of the 1930s; At the same time, Metzger anticipated an essential element of the liturgical constitution of the Second Vatican Council, which in the 1960s established this requirement for Catholic liturgy worldwide. Subsequent generations of architects took up and further developed Fritz Metzger's intention in the second half of the 20th century

Translated from:

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